



## Aruba's Hospitality and Tourism Students look towards their future

"Aruba is the ideal environment for training the future leaders of the Hospitality Industry," expressed Dr. Robin Di Pietro, visiting professor from the Rosen College of Hospitality Management of the University of Central Florida, and her colleague Duncan Dixon heartily concurs.

Little known to island visitors and even a number of residents, is that Aruba has a University, and as of last year it has established a course in cooperation with the University of Central Florida in Orlando that offers a Bachelor's Degree in Hospitality Management. This course is not only training the tourism executives of the future from amongst the Aruban population, but it has attracted students from around the Caribbean and Latin America. One of those Latin American students is the founding president of the Hospitality and Tourism Association, (HTA) Susan Ruiter of Venezuela. Joining her in a presentation on Wednesday to the students of the Hospitality and Tourism Unit of Aruba's E.P.I. School were the Vice-President Nathalie Klekboom, and Andreina Kock, Treasurer of this fledgling organization. Their purpose; to recruit members to the HTA, which is a student organization dedicated to creating opportunities and providing the best of education for the industry's future leaders by having them take charge of their lives and having a hand in directing them.

Dr. Di Pietro and Mr. Dixon, who will be visiting professors at the University of Aruba until the end of the semester accompanied the board of the student organization along with University Dean of Hospitality and Tourism Management Studies Dr. Ryan R. Peterson. The E.P.I. Hospitality and Management Unit offers an Associate's Degree when the course of study is completed, and also attracts students from around the Caribbean and Latin America. HTA President Susan Ruiter, an alumnus of the E.P.I. is working towards her Bachelors Degree at the University.

In her presentation Ms. Ruiter told the E.P.I. students "I've come to believe that each of use has a personal calling that is as unique as a fingerprint; and the best way to succeed is to discover what you love, then find a why to offer it to other in the form of a service. Working hard, allow the energy of the universe to lead you."

Ms. Ruiter and her fellow board members each went on to explain to the industry leaders of the future the plans for their association and the benefits of having membership. The HTA will provide a forum for the students' ideas and concerns with regular meetings and events. Tangible benefits, such as a book pool, is being suggested; where university students donate one of their old books, so that new students that may not be able to acquire them right away, as is often the case on an island, can borrow them until their own arrive. Another plan is to network with institutions that will very likely be future employers such as restaurants, hotels, and large tour operators so as to enable internships and on site visits.

Simply membership and the bonds of friendship that are formed with fellow industry leaders can also greatly increase the opportunity for success. As fellow students go on to take high level positions in tourism management they will remember outstanding individuals that they studied with when important jobs open up and they need someone. These are just some of the practical advantages of membership in such an organization as the HTA, but also the opportunity to meet, discuss and exchange ideas and concerns in their studies and the industry is an invaluable part of a full education. The E.P.I. students that were the recipients of the presentation obviously agreed, as nearly all of them joined the HTA that day.

Duncan Dixon and Dr. Di Pietro commented on the growth and future of the Hospitality and Tourism Management Industry, and living and teaching next door to the largest tourist attraction in the world puts them in an ideal position to do so. "When Rosen College of Hospitality Management was established as a separate school in the UCF six years ago, we had seventy students; today we have over 1800. Disneyworld welcomes forty-three million visitors a year. Aruba is now receiving a million visitors a year, and the number of hotel rooms is increasing, and the number of restaurants. We have to have the leadership ready so Aruba does not have to look outside for its expertise in this growing industry. An additional benefit is that Aruba can also start exporting its managers to other islands in the Caribbean, to Europe and the United States."

The agenda of the Hospitality and Tourism Association includes a lecture by Dr. Di Pietro on Wednesday evening of next week on "Restaurant Management." Interested individuals can contact Dr. Di Pietro at telephone #582-3901 ext 250 for more information about the association and future events.